

Bulletin No. 21
Pennsylvania State Council
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Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

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An American

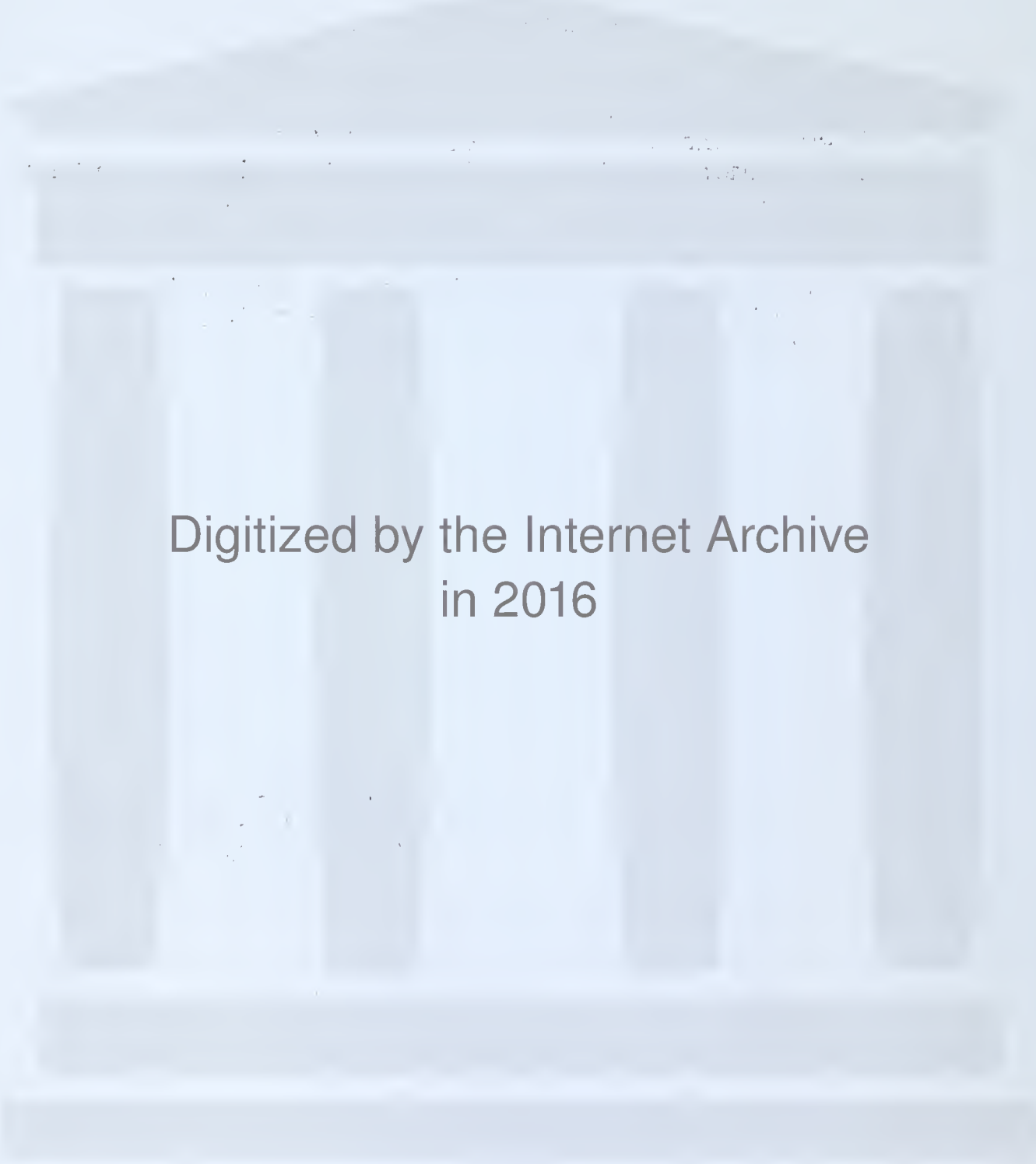
"Freedom" . Forum"

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Suggestions for the College Division and the
Committee on American Unity of Local Councils of Defense

(Based upon an Experiment Conducted in
Union County under the supervision of
the State Council of Defense)

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The
"Freedom Forum"

I. How it Began:

In the late Spring of 1941 the Americanism Chairman of the Lewisburg American Legion (Kratzer-Dull Post-182) offered a plan for a morale building program which, in consultation with the Executive Director of the State Council of Defense, was carried out under the direct supervision of the Union County Defense Council.

The idea is a development of the old American Town meeting, except that the Freedom Forum concentrates exclusively on those issues which concern the preservation of American freedom in the present World-wide Crisis.

II. How it Developed:

(a) After discussion in the County Council of Defense, a Freedom Forum Organizing Committee of five, including several Councils of Defense members, was appointed.

(b) This committee planned, advertised, and conducted the first Freedom Forum Meeting July 24, in the Union County Court House. The audience enthusiastically voted to meet in a Freedom Forum each month; and three meetings have now been held with increasing interest.

Such questions as the following have been or will be used:

1. To what extent Do You Believe That American Freedom is Endangered By The Axis Powers?
2. To What Extent Can A Christian Support National Defense?
3. What Are the Best Ways to Defeat Hitler and Hitlerism?
4. What Should America Do In the Present World-Wide Situation?
5. To What Extent Should We Support Russia?
6. Am I An Unconscious Fifth Columnist?
7. How Can Democracy Build A Better New World Order Than That Proposed By Hitler, or the Japanists, Or the Communists?

(c) The same committee, in cooperation with representatives of local civic and patriotic organizations, has now set up a second Freedom Forum in Mifflinburg, Pa., for that section of the county.

III. Power of the Freedom Forum in Building Morale:

1. The name, Freedom Forum, is keeping before the local public the need to be vigilant for preserving freedom.
2. The Forum is already helping toward deeper love and clearer understanding of fundamental democratic principles, - partly from the subjects discussed, and partly through the forum experience. Such a form is a peculiarly democratic thing. Hitler dares not permit a free forum in Germany.
3. In these open and fair discussions a "Consensus of judgment" is set up in the minds of speakers and listeners alike, which becomes a standard of morale for the community.
4. In a wholesome way and without witch hunting, through self-understanding as one listens to the discussions, unconscious fifth column thinking can be rooted out. Some statements, of course, have been made in these forums with which we deeply disagree; but they are being brought out into the open where they can be met, instead of lying like a poisonous deadening drug in the spirit of the community.

5. The exclusive concentration month after month on a series of questions related to the preservation of freedom, compels the audience to face more and more honestly our national and world situation. This effect has already been remarked upon in Lewisburg. Indifference and evasion and the tendency to put less important self interests first is the greatest danger to American morale, harder to meet than open opposition.
6. These discussions of life and death issues are arousing emotion as well as stimulating straight thinking. Even men and women partly case hardened against public speech and news and radio comments are being shaken out of their lethargy. The emotional effect during the discussions is cumulative, people getting more and more intensely "waked up" in the quick give and take on the forum floor.
7. The discussions started at the Forum continue in a spreading circle of informal conversation. For example, after the last Forum, when 29 out of 150 people spoke in the discussion, a woman, who had not attended the Freedom Forums, said, "I certainly am coming out to the next one. The other night at the benefit bridge, at every table they were talking about the Freedom Forum meeting."
8. Ten dozen ten-cent "I AM An American" booklets have been sold. These contain in pocket size the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, The Flag Code, national hymns, and addresses and watch-words of democracy by outstanding Americans. (Compiled by Francis Cavanah and Lloyd E. Smith; published by Whitman Publishing Co., Racine, Wisconsin.)

IV. Organization of the Freedom Forum:

1. The Type of Organization: It is simple but reaches into all sections of the community. It is democratically representative of the community, and at the same time fully coordinated with the Local Council of Defense. It is also "bore-proof", - cannot be controlled by special groups or "borers from within". In Lewisburg and vicinity twenty civic and patriotic groups are represented. These 20, plus 5 elected on the floor of the Freedom Forum, plus the Chairman of all local residents of the Council of Defense, compose the Board of 31 Governors, the legislative and executive agency.
2. Officers: All key officers and committee chairmen must be able and enthusiastic workers. A "dead" man, elected merely for prestige or past ability, can kill any organization, and one enthusiastic soul can build it up.
 - A. Chairman of the Board of Governors.
 - B. Forum leader (may also be chairman of the Board, or a committee chairman).
 - C. Vice Chairman and Vice Leader of the Forum (may also be a committee chairman).
 - D. Secretary, recording and corresponding.
 - E. Treasurer and Time Keeper (Forum leader should not himself keep time in Forum discussion).
 - F. Liaison Officer (To check delegates and call up absentees, see that they pass on notices and defense assignments to all organizations, that they get their members out to meetings, etc.)

3. Committees: (Are appointed in consultation with the Local Council of Defense to provide complete cooperation). Program Committee and Publicity Committee are essential. Other committees may be added to perform various morale building and defense services.
4. Time of Meeting: Once a month, with additional meetings as desired. Board of Governors should meet on a separate night if business is extensive, otherwise after the forum meeting.

V. Programs at Freedom Forum Meetings:

(Not less than $1\frac{1}{2}$ nor more than 2 hours.) Meeting place should, if possible, be just large enough to be filled. Have American Flag in place for salute and a Chinese gong or other bell that can be tapped by the Time Keeper. Such a bell is better than a gavel.

1. May open with first verse of "America" and Pledge to Flag.
2. State the question for discussion, though this has been in publicity.
3. One or two key-note or background addresses, 20 minutes for one or 10 minutes each for two speakers. (Timekeeper must ring warning bell one minute before time, and ring louder for time up.)
4. Reminder of rules.
5. Discussion. This is the heart of the program -- 60-80 minutes.)
6. Brief summation, and taking of a "show of hands" opinion poll on various issues, if desired.
7. Closing announcements.
8. Adjournment with verse of a patriotic hymn, or some read or recited statement of unity or American affirmation.

VI. Conduct of Forum Leader:

1. He must be fair. Usually he does not express his personal opinion on the question, except after asking someone else to preside, or sometimes at the close in place of an impartial summation.
2. But he must be a symbol of that for which the Freedom Forum stands, the preserving of American freedom. Any incidental remarks which he makes, and his general spirit, must show this.
3. He must encourage honest and free discussion. Sometimes when things are slow, he may invite a person by name to express his opinion, or he may call upon a visitor or some too timid soul. At the first few meetings it is wise for him to ask in advance three or four to be willing to begin the floor discussion. After the audience has "warmed up" there is usually no trouble.
4. He must not talk too much: Comments by him on what people have said tend to kill the floor discussion.

VII. Rules of the Freedom Forum:

1. The Rule of Time: Four minutes for first floor speech, two minutes for second, and all replies limited to two minutes. Timekeeper gives warning tap on the bell $\frac{1}{2}$ minute before time, and louder ring at end. Questions directed to others are limited to one minute with no warning tap. When the hour to close is near, and many wish to speak, the forum leader should shorten all speeches to two or one minutes.

2. The Rule of Subject Matter: Stick to the question, though the questions are broad and lead into many angles. Forum leader should rule out irrelevant remarks by special hobby cranks or deliberate "hecklers"
3. The Rule of Democratic Courtesy: All who love democracy have a right to the floor and have a right to respectful hearing, though we may strongly differ. Clapping is proper, but hissing and booing is out.
4. The Rule of Sincerity: This is a forum in which honest men and women freely confer together on matters of life and death. Without name calling, or personalities, all should speak out their real convictions, never arguing merely to take the opposite side. Honest conference rather than theoretical debate is desired.

VIII. Our Purpose:

The work of those who would strengthen American morale is not easy, - situated as we are on an apparently safe continent between two oceans, far removed from the center of struggle. But loyal and true Americans realize increasingly that the whole system of "streamlined brutality" has to be destroyed, if we are going to leave a safe and free America to our children.

More and more we see that America cannot be safe and free except in a world that is safe and free, - and that is decently organized to keep freedom for future generations.

For such a world let us live. For such a world, though we do not desire war or death, let us be willing to die. For such a world let us above all things work, work, work, - till we win for freedom.

"That Government of the People, by the People, for the People Shall not Perish from the Earth."

Supplement

Check Sheet To Be Mimeographed by Local Councils of Defense
and Used at Freedom Forum Meetings

THE FREEDOM FORUM

1. Are you interested in attending future forums (yes or no)? _____
2. Which of the following questions do you feel are most worth discussing? (Write numbers 1, 2, 3, etc. up to 7 opposite questions to give your order of preference)
 - () A. To What Extent Do You Believe That American Freedom Is Endangered By The Axis Powers?
 - () B. Am I An Unconscious Fifth Columnist?
 - () C. What Are The Best Ways To Defeat Hitler and Hitlerism?
 - () D. Should America Declare War On The Axis Powers?
 - () E. Should America Keep Aloof From Europe And Asia, Or Should We Support As Strongly As Possible Britain, China And Other Democracies Against The Axis Powers?
 - () F. To What Extent Should We Support Russia?
 - () G. How Shall We Treat Nazis, Facists And Communists In America? (Can we grant the freedom to destroy freedom in a democracy; and to what extent do free and loyal citizens have a right to differ in a democracy?)
 - () H. Have Manufacturers, Laboring Men, Farmers, Business Men, Or Any Other Citizens The Right To Make Increased Profit Out Of The Present Emergency?
 - () I. To What Extent Can Christian People Support National Defense?
 - () J. What Will Be The Effect On Democratic and Religious Freedoms If We Permit The Defeat Of Britain and China?
 - () K. What Are The Democratic Standards Of Loyalty And Courtesy In Criticising Our Local, State, And National Leaders And Their Policies?
 - () L. In What Principles Of Freedom Did Our Forefathers Believe; And To What Extent Do They Apply To Our Present Time?
 - () M. Should America Announce More Clearly Her Objectives For Peace And World Order, - And If So, What Objectives?
 - () N. How Can Democracy Build A Better New World Order Than That Proposed By Hitler, Or The Japanists, Or The Communists?
3. Write in any further questions you would like to have discussed.
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
4. Are you willing to accept assignments for service in conservation health, fire prevention, airplane spotting, emergency relief, etc under the direction of the Council of Defense, - if within your ability (yes or no)? _____

Name _____ Address _____ Telephone _____

